



The

Book Burners

by

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Burned



ONE CANNOT but admire the colossal nerve of the self-styled liberals, who did such a successful hatchet job on anti-Communist books during the Red Decade, now daring to pose as defenders of the freedom to read. It is not even as if the McCarthy committee aspired to emulate the original "book burners" who, only a few years ago, were abusing their near-monopoly in the book reviewing field to suppress all books which exposed the true nature of Communism, particularly in China. Neither this nor any other Congressional committee aims to curtail the publication, distribution, or sale of Communist or pro-Soviet books, anywhere in the world. Our legislators are simply trying to establish the principle that Americans should not be taxed for the benefit of a foreign power by contributing money for the dissemination of Communist propaganda through our overseas libraries. In a rational world this principle would be generally

recognized. But such is the power of the hysterical Left that the public was led to believe that the removal of pro-Communist and anti-American books from our overseas libraries was comparable to Hitler's book burnings.

The statute which established the United States Information Service libraries set as their aim: "The dissemination abroad of information about the United States, its people, and policies promulgated by the Congress, the President, the Secretary of State and other responsible officials of the Government having to do with matters affecting foreign affairs." Why, then, should the American Library Association, which claims the dubious honor of having been intimately associated with the U.S. overseas libraries program, have proclaimed that "freedom is under attack" when the McCarthy committee endeavored to force the removal from our libraries of Communist propaganda litera-

ture? And why should so many columnists, commentators and editorial writers have echoed and re-echoed the call to defend our liberties, not against the Communists out to destroy all our freedoms, but against those who dare to expose the insidious influence of the totalitarians of the Left?

It could be argued that the foreign reader would never be able to understand our self-defeating war, and post-war, policies unless he realized how great was the influence formerly exerted by American Communist sympathizers. But if this fact warranted the inclusion of Communist books, what excuse can be offered by the State Department for its ban on practically all books critical of the Roosevelt administration or of the Marshall-Acheson foreign policy? Why should only Communist criticisms of America be made available to the foreigners who frequent our libraries?

IN ITS June 25th manifesto on "Freedom to Read," the American Library Association proclaimed that "the ordinary citizen, by exercising his critical judgment, will accept the good and reject the bad." But it failed to explain how the citizen's "critical judgment" can come into play so long as he is given only one side of the question. It may be that the American Library Association is in possession of absolute truth and has been helping mankind to choose the right path by failing to recom-

mend the inclusion in our overseas libraries of books not written from the New Deal, or Socialist, or anti-anti-Communist point of view, while selecting most books written by Communist sympathizers. But it cannot consistently maintain that it believes in "democracy," or freedom of choice, while itself discriminating against the books which it considers to be "bad."

The fact is that many of the people who abuse McCarthy were well content so long as "progressives" enjoyed a monopoly in the book burning business. However, now that their own ox is being gored, these same totalitarian liberals are yelling so loud that the still, small voice of reason and common sense is barely audible. Hence the need to supply that much abused member of the human race, the American taxpayer, with a few facts concerning the overseas libraries he maintains.

While I was in Europe last year I visited several of the USIS libraries and made a detailed examination of the catalogues of our *Amerika Haus* libraries in Germany. I found that they contained:

1. An astonishingly large number of books by known Communist authors, and an even greater number of books written by authors sympathetic to the Soviet Union or strongly biased against anti-Communists.

2. A listing of books on Russia, China, and Korea which gives preponderant weight to authors who

either favor the Communists or are "neutral" in their attitude toward Soviet tyranny.

3. The cataloguing of the comparatively few anti-Communist books which the libraries contain under misleading headings where the foreign reader is unlikely to discover them.

4. A dearth of books written from the Republican or conservative point of view, as against an abundance of books on international affairs, history, politics, and economics by Socialists and New Dealers.

AS I INFORMED the McCarthy committee when I appeared as a witness on April first, the most remarkable fact about our libraries in Germany was that their catalogues contained no section on Communism. The explanation of this strange phenomenon is perhaps to be found in the Allied Control Council Orders we issued in conjunction with the Russians at the beginning of the Occupation, and which have never been officially rescinded. Mr. A. V. Boerner, who succeeded Shepherd Stone in 1952 as Director of the Office of Public Affairs at HICOG, admitted to me in an interview in November 1952 that Allied Control Council Order No. 5, which forbids any action "prejudicial to the security and prestige of the Allied forces," technically still applied. Since criticism of Communism is undoubtedly prejudicial to the "prestige" of our Soviet "allies," this order would

constitute sufficient reason to ban anti-Communist books. But there is also Allied Control Council Order No. 4, originally drawn up by Soviet Marshal Zhukov, which forbids the Germans to read any book which has a "militarist" or "expansionist" content, or is "directed against" any of the four Occupation powers.

Naturally, today, these illiberal laws are no longer generally enforced. But like other relics of the bad old days when we were collaborating with the Soviets to keep Germany down and out, they have left an evil legacy. Germans still fear to be called neo-Nazis if they are too strongly anti-Communist, and the Americans responsible for our libraries in Germany were clearly affected by these Allied Control Council Orders both in their choice of books and in their manner of listing them.

Since there was no section on Communism, I naturally looked under "Russia" for such anti-Soviet books as we deemed it permissible for the Germans to read. Here I managed to find Kravchenko's *I Chose Freedom* and three books by David Dallin. But these and one or two other anti-Soviet books were heavily outnumbered by the writings of Walter Duranty, William Mandel, the "Red Dean" of Canterbury Hewlett Johnson, Vera Micheles Dean, E. H. Carr, Maurice Hindus, Henry Wallace, Pearl Buck, Edgar Snow, and Anna Louise Strong. The largest number of anti-Communist books were to be found under the heading

"Labor and Capital," thus creating the impression that the world-wide struggle between freedom and Communism is one between capital and labor, and that to be anti-Soviet is to be an enemy of the working class. The books so listed included both Fulton Sheen's *Communism and the Conscience of the West* and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee report on *The Strategy and Tactics of World Communism*.

William L. White's *Report on the Russians*, Eugene Lyons' *Assignment in Utopia*, Koestler's *The Yogi and the Commissar* and my own *Lost Illusion* appeared under "Europe." William Kendall's translation of Rossi's *A Communist Party in Action*, dealing with French Communist tactics, strategy, and influence, is even more carefully hidden than the rest. Together with Jim Burnham's *The Struggle for the World*, it is listed only under "United States."

AS AGAINST the few anti-Communist books which the diligent reader can find hiding their light under strange bushels, our libraries contained a truly astonishing array of books by known Communists and Soviet espionage agents, as well as by writers who are either suspected of being Communists or who have consistently espoused the Soviet cause. Besides those already noted I found Gunther Stein, Louis Dolivet, Howard Fast, Harriet Moore, Foster Rhea Dulles, William Jaffe, Louis Aragon, Johannes Steele, and Victor

A. Yakhonteff. Even the books of Russian Soviet propagandists such as Ilya Ehrenburg were included in our libraries. When I discovered Egon Erwin Kisch's *Paradeis Amerika* in the German language section of the *Amerika Haus* catalogs, I came to the conclusion that a special effort must have been made to find anti-American books. For this attack on the United States was written many years ago by a once-famous German Communist whose books must have been hard to find after Hitler's book burnings.

In looking for books on China and the Far East in general, I found a roster which read exactly like one prepared by the Institute of Pacific Relations in its heyday. Except for a few historical works which do not touch Communism, I counted thirteen books by authors who favored the Chinese Communist cause — and not *one* on the other side.

Thus the German reader who relied on our libraries for information was led to believe that our enemy in Korea represents the "progressive" forces in Asia. I was, therefore, hardly astonished on July 25, 1952, to hear a German radio commentator called Dr. Werner Krug state that "there is no question in Asia of an armed Communist danger. The Communist menace in Asia is due to the failure of the West to give up its positions. No amount of money or arms can defeat it."

There is little doubt that the exclusion from our overseas libraries

of anti-Communist books on China was deliberate. For instance, Heryman Maurer's book *Collision Between East and West* was withdrawn from the *Amerika Haus* libraries by Shep Stone. Since Maurer's book was far milder in its criticism of the State Department's China policy than my *China Story*, I was hardly surprised when the German librarian in our Hamburg *Amerika Haus* told me that she had been refused permission to buy my book, known to her in its German translation.

THE LISTS of books on the Second World War, and on international relations, were similarly overweighted with pro-Communist and anti-anti-Communist books.

The consequences of the one-sidedness of our libraries have been most serious in Germany, since here the United States Occupation authorities have exercised a general censorship over all reading. As late as 1951, HICOG was still forbidding the import or sale of books which it considered undesirable for the Germans to read. (I have in my possession a photostat copy of a letter from a German bookseller to a German customer expressing regret at his inability to supply my book, *The High Cost of Vengeance*, because it was critical of our original occupation policy.) And as late as 1952, some German municipal libraries still believed they were under an obligation to ban books displeasing to the four Occupation powers.

The intelligent thing to have done following the exposure by the McCarthy committee, would have been to add anti-Communist books to our libraries instead of simply subtracting Communist ones. Unfortunately, this was evidently a task beyond the capacities of the State Department's Information Service personnel. Accustomed for years to the life of Riley, not only as "conquerors" in Germany but also in Paris, Rome, and other world capitals, they evidently lacked the energy as well as the knowledge and political intelligence to undertake the task of converting our overseas libraries into real storehouses of knowledge presenting all points of view. It was easier to burn books than to read them. So instead of filling in the gaps by including the books which had been banned as unorthodox or heretical during the Teheran-Yalta-Potsdam era, they simply threw out all "controversial" books — meaning those by authors with any kind of political or moral convictions.

It is always difficult to decide which bureaucrats are goats and which sheep. But there is little doubt that the majority of the Americans who work for the United States Information Service are woolly liberals unqualified by temperament, education, and training for the hard tasks required of them in this era of struggle on all fronts against Communism. They simply have not got what it takes to win a cold war, much less a hot one.